

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently amended) A process for producing a sodium acrylate polymer by a free-radical polymerization of sodium acrylate with or without other monomers in an aqueous medium, which comprises using sodium acrylate in a form of an aqueous solution or dispersion ~~obtainable~~ by dissolving or dispersing the solid sodium acrylate in the aqueous medium.

2. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the aqueous solution of sodium acrylate contains from 10 to 100 mol% of sodium acrylate and from 0 to 90 mol% of acrylic acid.

3. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the aqueous solution of sodium acrylate contains from 10 to 95 mol% of sodium acrylate and from 5 to 90 mol% of acrylic acid.

4. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the aqueous solution of sodium acrylate contains from 40 to 90 mol% of sodium acrylate and from 10 to 60 mol% of acrylic acid.

5. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the aqueous solution contains from 0.01 to 5 mol% of a monomer containing at least two ethylenically unsaturated double bonds.

6. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the aqueous monomer solution is prepared using solid anhydrous sodium acrylate.

7. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the solid sodium acrylate has a water content from 0.1% to 10% by weight.

8. (Previously presented) A sodium acrylate polymer prepared by the process of claim 1.

9. (Previously presented) A method of producing a polymer from solid sodium acrylate comprising dissolving the solid sodium acrylate in water to form an aqueous monomer solution and polymerizing the monomer solution in the presence or absence of other monomers.

10. (Previously presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the solid sodium acrylate is wholly or partly replaced by another water-soluble salt of acrylic acid.